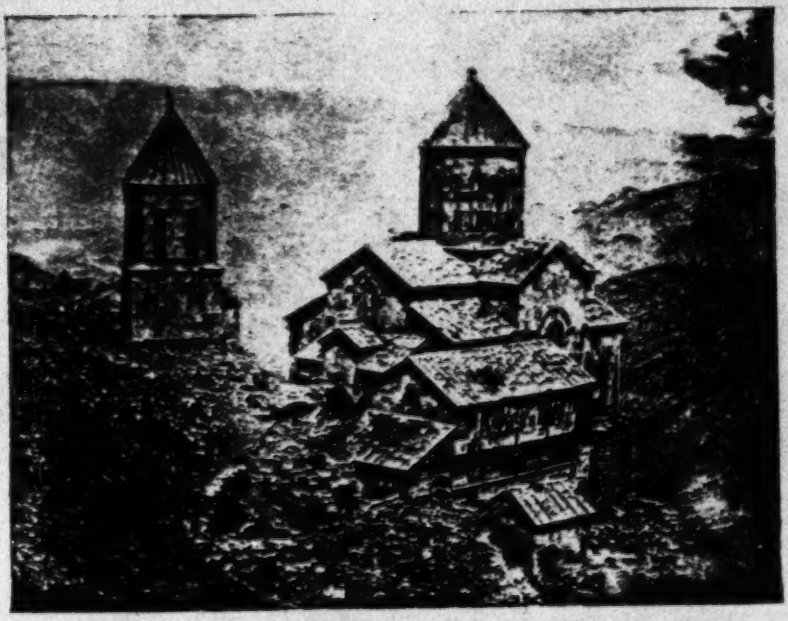
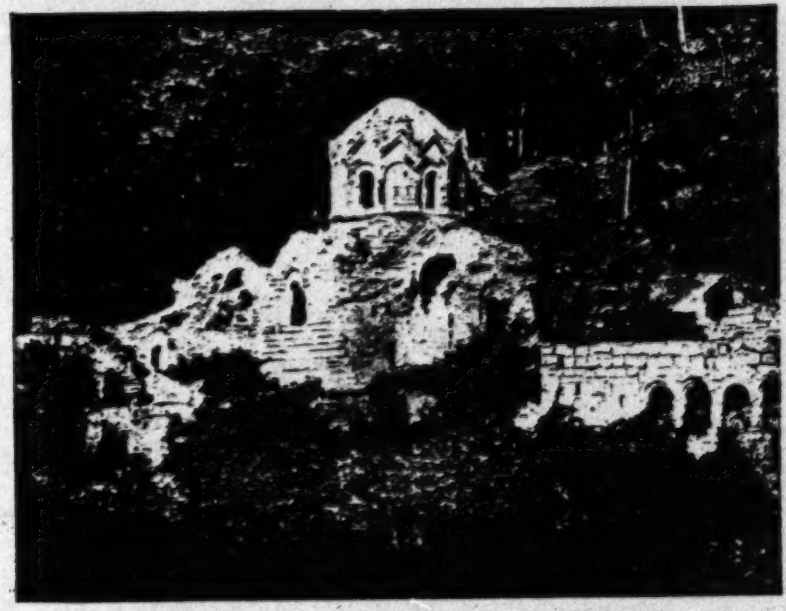
1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 R11 Georgia R11

● 346





The Meskhian Monasteries: Safar and Opisi

(From a photograph of Safar published in *Materiali po Arkheologii Kavkaza*, Vol. VI; of Opisi from a photograph by Marr, published in *Trudui i Materialuye*, Vol. VII)

[face page 80

lt Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RII Georgia RII
● 346

The Meskhian Monasteries: Khandzti and Shatberdi

(From a photograph by Marr published in *Tekuti i Razishaniya*, Vol. VII)

[face page 94

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

[Medieval Georgia]

the anger of the Catholicos of their time on account of their way of living. [795] 659

The two powers of the Church and the Crown seem to have been virtually interdependent. The Catholicos and his bishops held wide lands and owned great numbers of serfs—"the sons of Mtzkheta". The Church property was free from taxation except in events of emergency, and the Catholicos enjoyed a share of state dues and in addition such perquisites as the takings of the toll-house at Gori and a tax on dye-houses. Many *mtavarni* and *aznaurni* were his vassals; and the levies from the estates of the Church went on campaign under their own commander, who was, in principle, independent of the royal surveillance. Together the Crown and the Church monopolized all the power and the greater part of the wealth of the country, and on terms of amity and confidence, the one supported the other. The King nominated a new Catholicos, and the Catholicos presided over the assembly of lords, spiritual and temporal, at the coronation of a new king. 471 659

> "An affront", says the Code of Wakhtangi, "of whatever nature it may be, made against the King or the Catholicos, is of equal gravity; for if the first is master of the body, the second is of the soul, and they have both received the consecration of God and men." [1]

Much of the wealth that poured into the country as a result of the consolidation of the monarchy and the successful wars against the Muslims, found its way into the hands of the ecclesiasts. Triumphant kings endowed the Church with new lands and further numbers of serfs, and successful soldiers minted their loot into richly bejewelled icons and the spoils of Muslim harims into sacerdotal plate.

Hundreds of churches and monasteries sprang up, constructed at great cost by architects, stone-masons and wood-carvers, many of whom were brought from Byzantium. The churches were full of gorgeous vestments, of rare illuminated holy books, of miraculous relics presented by noble devotees returned from the Holy Land,[2] of costly gold and silver vessels. At the boards of the Catholicos and of his bishops, holy men and their lay guests feasted to their full on the first fruits of the land. And the Church was chosen by the cadets of the aristocracy as a career more lucrative and more pleasing than service at the court, or in the trains of the great *didebulni*. 346 795

[1] Brosset, *H. de la G.*, Intro. et Add., p. cx. In the reign of Bagrat IV the Annalists refer to the Catholicos as "the Holy King Melkhisidek" (I, 325).

[2] For an account of the curious relics in the possession of the Dadiani see Chardin, 1686 ed., p. 99.

[Medieval Georgia]

Kazakh district of Georgia. No very ancient examples of Caucasian rug-weaving exist, but it is certain that the industry was developed from remote times. But here again, as Georgian architecture is part of East Christian architecture so is the Caucasian weaver's art an integral part of Islamic art —although the Christian weavers of Armenia, using what has come to be an essentially Islamic medium, have acquired no little renown.

Georgian and Armenian illumination, which achieved a certain degree of quality, cannot compare with the gorgeous workmanship of the Persians, and its technique is an adaptation of the Persian manner—including the aged animal style—and East Christian ecclesiastical formalism. The little that remains of Georgian fresco-painting and mosaic-work is crude copying from the Greek masters, but Georgian carving on wood and stone, although in the Byzantine tradition, is good work and has some originality. It is certainly the equal of the Armenian stone-carving which has attained some celebration in Europe.

In two spheres of art did the mediæval Georgians achieve not only quality equal to the best of Byzantium and Persia, but creative originality. In epic poetry, the Georgians far surpassed the Byzantines; and although comparison is difficult and invidious, it may be claimed that the masterpieces of Shota Rusthaveli and Sargis Tmogveli rival, if they do not surpass, the more celebrated works of their Persian contemporaries. And in the metallurgical arts—particularly in their own speciality, the metal icon—the Georgians produced creations which certainly equalled the products of the Islamic and Mediterranean cities of the time.

The churches of Georgia in their general design and structure may be divided into two principal types, which correspond in character to contemporary monuments through the Byzantine world and Armenia. The more ancient was the *centralized* type—the circular or quadrangular chapel, so constructed as to direct the gaze of the devout upward to the arched dome of the cupola, which with its sacred frescoes was to be identified with the vault of heaven. By the sixth century the majority of churches were being built in this style—which Strzygowski derives from the domed tent of the nomad Sacæ and the fashion of which he attributes to the influence of Iranian and Armenian ideas. The old Roman *basilica*, with its broad nave and impression of deep perspective, was passing. Justinian built his church on the Grave of Our Lord in Jerusalem in the new style. It was

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 R11 Georgia R11

000 followed in the magnificent churches of Syria, at St. Elias of Brusa, at St. George of Salonika and at St. Vitali of Ravenna, at St. Serge and Little Sophia and St. Irene in Byzantium, and it was finally brought to its apogee in St. Sophia.

● 346 177 531 The *centralized* type owed much to the initiation if not to the invention of the Armenians, and there are many churches built on this design in Armenia. In Georgia the churches of the *centralized* type which survive are few in number; the best examples are the Church of the Holy Cross at Mtzkheta, and the churches of Martvili and Ateni in Mingrelia and Dranda in Abkhazeti. In churches of this type the *cupola* had no *drum*, or the *drum* was only of very stocky dimensions.

Between the tenth and twelfth centuries a more complex structure representing a combination of the *centralized* plan with the older *basilica* had resulted in the development of the *cruciform* conception, in which the intention was to concentrate the gaze of the worshipper round and over the altar. The churches of SS. Andrew and Theotokos in Constantinople, the Catholic and Apostolic Church in Athens and Daphni near Athos, belong to this type. The diameter of the *cupola* was not so great as in the earlier *centralized* style; it had a lesser interlie and for that reason held much more lightly; this latter fact allowed the construction of a taller *drum* which enabled the building to be given a "head". A better proportion was given to the whole *ensemble* and the frontal appearance was greatly improved. In Georgia the majority of churches were built on variations of this latter *cruciform* plan, the most notable examples of which are Kutais Cathedral, and the churches of Mokvi, Bedia, Porta and Pitsunda. The type and plan of these churches belong to the period between the tenth and twelfth centuries, although many of them are of later times, and the reconstruction of some on the ancient model, dates from the seventeenth century. In the churches of the tenth to twelfth centuries, the *ensemble* was more pleasing than in the earlier structures, and the fronts were built higher and were decorated with cornices and carved ornamentations. The whole contrasts in its grace and harmony with the more ancient type, where there is practically no *drum* under the *cupola* or if there is a *drum*, it is of low structure and distinguished by its heaviness and stuntedness.

After the combination of the *centralized* type with the old *basilica* type, the *cupola* was heightened and the *drum*

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

[Medieval Georgia]

346 531 171 assumed a greater importance. Separated masses came into being, the structural joining of which made it possible to evolve from a formless mixture of outbuildings—as in St. Sophia of Constantinople—the form of integral beauty which is exemplified in St. Sophia of Trebizond and at Gelati in Imereti. The high and graceful *cupola* of the Caucasus covered often with a *tent* or *head* (the ancient symbol of sanctity) perfected the whole conception of composite harmony. Bedia in Abkhazeti—built in the first decade of the eleventh century by King Bagrat III, in honour of Our Lady of Blachernæ—with its finely carved walls covered with the ancient interlaced design, must have been, in its unruined state, one of the finest examples of this Georgian interpretation of Byzantine and Armenian architectural principles.

Abkhazeti and Samtzkhé—the Chorokhi country—were always favoured by the Bagratid kings as their ancient patrimony, and it was in those two regions that the most beautiful churches were built during the vigorous days of the rising monarchy, when Kartli still lay open to Mussulman incursions, and Kakheti was an obscure and independent principality. In the heart of Samtzkhé, along the Chorokhi valley and its tributaries, a number of beautiful churches were built; such are the ruins of Tbeti in Shavsheti, Yeni Rabat (Antonisi) and Opisa, of Khulo in Achara and of Zarzma in the valley of the Jaqis-tsqali.

The churches of Samtzkhé were less influenced by Byzantine conceptions than those of Abkhazeti. The spreading vault of Dranda, Mokvi and Pitsunda in Abkhazeti is met with rarely in other parts of Georgia. The church at Mokvi, which like that at Dranda bears indications of a later reconstruction, had, to begin with, a spreading vault, which indicates undoubtedly the Byzantine origin of its plan and mass. Pitsunda, despite the tradition of its foundation by Justinian, belongs to the same period as Mokvi, and, like Mokvi, it bears a strong resemblance to the contemporary churches of St. Sophia in Kiev and Novgorod.

346 531 Other churches—as Bedia in Mingrelia and the Meskhian foundations—although they are in many ways like those of Abkhazeti and are of the same period, have already their own differences both in plan and construction; there are no altar projections and niches appear. The walls are covered with carvings showing local originality, braidings and broad connecting lines of crosses and animal figures, hemming round

l: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

the windows and doors. Intervals between the lines are filled with ornamentation—interlaced and vegetable designs: the top is cut out like a tent; there are no columns, but lines are already abundant. 346 531

Lastly we see the ultimate evolution to which Georgian ecclesiastical architecture attained, where capitals and bases appear and the lines develop into columns of different widths. This type includes the finest of all the ecclesiastical monuments of the Caucasus—Kutais Cathedral—and the Chorokhi churches of Shatberdi (Porta) and Dolisi Khana. The churches from which columnar decoration is absent may be regarded as appertaining to the more local Georgian type, the decorative affinities of which are oriental; those with columnar decoration—although local characteristics are not absent—have definitely the stamp of Byzantine art.

Kutais was the capital of the Bagratids until the first quarter of the twelfth century; under the Mongol hegemony it was a safer seat for the Georgian kings than was Tiflis, and during the Turkish and Persian wars Georgian cultured life was continued here with less interruption than in the eastern country. It is not surprising therefore that the artistic centre of the mediæval Georgian Church is to be found at Kutais and Gelati, rather than at Tiflis and Mtzkheta.

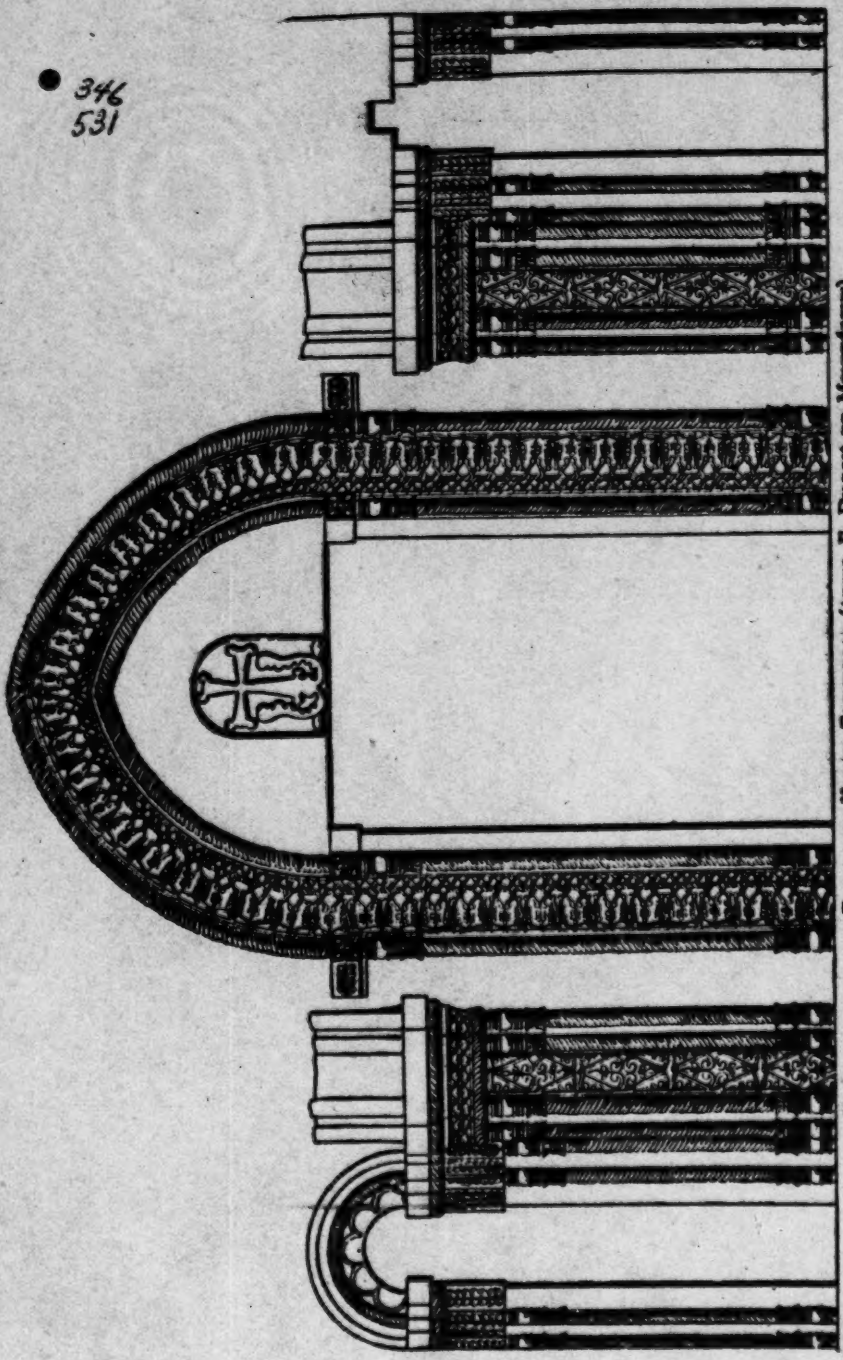
Bagrat III began the construction of Kutais Cathedral as a shrine in honour of his mother, the noble Queen Gurandukhti, in 1003; it was completed by his grandson Bagrat IV, whose first wife, Elena, a niece of the Emperor Romanos Argyros, had brought in her train a number of Byzantine artists and craftsmen. The Cathedral was finally wrecked by the Turks in 1691. The plan of Kutais Cathedral represents a rather late development of the *cruciform* plan, and on the same design several of the finest Georgian monuments which survive have been built—Gelati, Tortomi in Samtzkhé, and the restored Cathedral of Mtzkheta built by King Alexander after the devastations of Timur. It is in its carved stone decorations that the Cathedral of Kutais is most notable and the wealth of carving distinguishes it, with Tortomi and Tbeti, from other contemporary monuments.

The façade of Kutais varies in its decorations; the western side is poorest, probably because it was little seen from the road. The eastern front is richest and it is likely that on this side the Cathedral was most open to the view of believers. Rich cylinders on three ramparts with bases and capitals, indicate the trunks of columns, and in form correspond

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

[Medieval Georgia]

346
531



RESTORATION OF THE FAÇADE OF KUTAÏS CATHEDRAL (AFTER F. DU BOIS DE MONTPÉREUX).

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

346 closely to the decoration of Tbeti and Gelati. This columnar
531 decoration is, of course, essentially Byzantine, but the Cathedral has, nevertheless, its distinct Georgian identity and its characteristic Georgian details, as, for instance, the altar-niche and the interlaced ornamentations.

The great days of Georgian church-building came to an end in the thirteenth century. After the period of the Mongol and Timurid wars, the architectural history of the country is chiefly notable for the ambitious reconstructions of Mtzkheta and Sioni by the Kartlian kings. The ancient churches of Abkhazeti fell into ruins and stand half-buried in the forest, and Mongols and Osmanli wrecked the shrines of Samtzkhé. Only here and there where a rich feudatory had achieved independence and a temporary prosperity did a new foundation rise beside the humbler church of the domain. Thus in the middle of the fifteenth century the Atabegi Manuchar raised the fine Church of Safar over against Akhaltzikhé, seven thousand feet above the sea. An Armenian architect seems to have built for him, and his craftsmen achieved some exquisite stone-carving and some of the best surviving mural frescoes of the Caucasus. About the middle of the sixteenth century the kings of Kakheti embellished and reconstructed Alaverdi as the Metropolitan See of their precarious kingdom; and the Eristavni of the Aragvi raised the large brick pile of Ananuri—with its elaborate and grotesque carvings of trees, and serpents biting their tails, chained lions and hares. But the kings of Georgia were in extremity and the fount of East Christian art—Byzantium—was choked for ever. No trickle of the influence of Renaissance architecture came through into the closed Pontine lands, and the Baroque, spreading with the commercing of the French and the Italians, penetrated into Anatolia only far enough to be remembered in the bastard mosque of Yuzgad.

341 Separated from the Georgian districts of Lechkhumi and
531 Radsha by passes which are only accessible to the traveller
177 from the last half of June to the end of August, Svaneti, in language, in customs and in art, has always been distinguished from the more open parts of Georgia. The tall and slender stone towers, resembling in character the round towers of Ireland, are an individual feature of Svanian architecture and their origin has never been satisfactorily explained. These towers indeed, together with the ancient interlaced design, and in combination with certain physical, psychological and linguistic affinities, have suggested an intangible and mys-

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

[Medieval Georgia]

341 531 171 terious connection between the Iber-ni of the Black Sea and the Hiberni of the Atlantic island—a remote connection which will probably never be scientifically explained, but which nevertheless exists. The geographical isolation of Svaneti preserved always a conservatism in both linguistic and cultural processes, and here remnants of things most anciently Georgian survive. The ecclesiastical architecture of Svaneti affords an example of this cultural conservatism.

● 341 In Svaneti, the *basilica* form of church survived and was developed centuries after the *centralized* and *cruciform* types had become common in Georgia and throughout the East Christian world. The poverty of Svaneti may serve to explain the *basilica* type. The low arched vault employed in the construction of the *basilica* is more simple and easy to build than the *cupola* with its *drum*. Countess Uvarov argues against this explanation on the ground that the frescoes covering the interiors of the Svanian churches and the wealth of icons and sacerdotal plate found therein, the carved doors and iconostases and wrought gates, contradict the assumption of poverty in Svaneti during the great days of the Bagratid Kingdom. But the fact that the frescoes are of later date than the buildings themselves and that they were mostly painted during the days of the Imerian King Giorgi II (1548–85) and his Queen, Tamara Diasamidze, and of their son Alexander, and of King Bagrat IV and his Queen Tamara (1662–80), indicates that Svaneti was specially favoured by royalty during the harryings of Imereti by the Turks, while it is an established fact that much of the wealth in the churches was carried there during troubled times to save it from the sack of the richer churches and monasteries in the south.

The explanation of the striking difference between Georgian and Svanian architecture seems to lie in the poverty and natural conservatism of Svaneti and in the fact that while the *basilicas* of Georgia were destroyed during the Arab wars and later replaced by the newer *centralized* and *cruciform* types, the ancient *basilicas* of Svaneti remained untouched, while the shrines might be repaired but seldom rebuilt.

000 Again, it is possible that the *basilica* form in Svaneti developed from those pagan sanctuaries *Khati*, *Nishi*, *Mairemi*, in which the inhabitants of the mountains first began to learn to sing praises to the Christian God. The Church of Nuzala in Osseti and a multitude of small chapels scattered all along

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Svan

771 Consequently, if successful in hunting, the Svan considers it his
776 duty to bring, first of all, a thank-offering to the deity—the protector of game—in order to appease him and secure his help in the future.[12] The Svans usually bring their sacrifices to highly situated places. To insure the success of individuals as well as the prosperity of the country as a whole, the Svan generally subscribes to the protection of the local deity. In spite of such opinions, the Svans have a notion of the Christian Trinity, although obscure. They were converted to Christianity, as were the Khevsurs, Pshavs, and Tushes, in the historic past, and therein may lie the historical explanation of the fall and degeneration of Christianity in Svanetia as well as elsewhere in the Georgian High-
[775] lands. Historical records clearly demonstrate that the Svans and their land formed a part of the Georgian kingdom.[13] It is known that from the time of Queen Tamar's father the Georgian chronicles divided the whole of Georgia into seven parts according to the seven territories inhabited by the Georgian nation; and in the formation of these seven provinces, Svanetia was included.

Besides their political affiliation, the Svans had other ties with Georgia in their religious life. The great number of ruined and ancient churches, containing numerous preserved manuscripts, icons, crosses, etc., proves that efforts were made by the kings of Georgia to spread and strengthen the Christian faith in
●[346] Svanetia. The number of churches there is very large; they are found even in the most insignificant villages; in some there are as many as five or six.[14] They are especially numerous in Free Svanetia, many half-dilapidated and ruined churches and sacred places where, according to tradition, churches once stood. In Ushkul, for example, there are twenty such ruins.

795 Examining the old Georgian ordinances, called *gujaras,* we find that the Georgian clergy exercised a great influence upon Svanetia, where it appears Christianity was at that time solidly established. The church of Svanetia stood under the rule of the Abkhazian,

---

[12] The details concerning this subject are brought out in the chapter on Contract and Group Solidarity.
[13] Bakradze: a, 29.
[14] *Ibid.,* 34.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur
Swan

need of timber in Kali they are preserved undamaged to the present time." 778

Information of similar character concerning these sacred woods in the Georgian Highlands is supplied by almost every traveler and explorer who has visited these regions.

The maintenance of the sacred woods and the veneration of trees was a common trait among all Georgians in past times. At present the churches and monasteries in the Lowlands of Georgia are surrounded by magnificent old trees which grow unmolested. Even the places of worship may bear the name of a tree. For example, the well-known monastery in Megrelia is called "the monastery of Tchkon-didi," meaning "the monastery of the Great Oak," from the Megrelian words *tchkoni* (oak) and *didi* (large or great). I myself remember that during my visits in the villages of Megrelia during summer vacations I was told many times that I must avoid breaking the branches of a tree, because this is a sin (*tsoda*) in Megrelia and that a tree feels and suffers as a man does.

It should be noted that these beliefs connected with trees and woods are not peculiar to the Georgians only, but are shared by the other peoples of the Caucasian peninsula—by the Circassians, for example. Thus the French traveler, M. Taitbout de Marigny, relates concerning his visit to the sacred woods in Circassia:[21] "Ver le soir nous risquâmes une promenade dans une bois sacré qui est a une petite distance du rivage. Une croix grossiérement faite, et dont la partie supérieure à la form d'un trèfle, consacre ce lieu a la religion; et on n'oserait y couper des arbres, ni même toucher, aux objets qu'on y vient déposer. Le signe du christianisme qui y est conservé leur a été transmis par lèurs ancêtres. Ils ignorent ce qu'il représente . . . ." The sacred groves of the Circassians are also described in the works of J. S. Bell[22] and J. A. Longworth.[23]

Every community of the Georgian Highlands has its place of worship—the sanctuary called *Khati*, meaning in Georgian, "holy 778 346

[21] Taitbout de Marigny: b, 306.
[22] Bell.
[23] Longworth.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur
Svan

image," although in the majority of cases there is no image of any kind present in the sanctuary. The word *khati* designates a holy image (icon), and also the whole place of worship (sanctuary); moreover, it is used as the name and personification of the deity itself. Besides being a place of worship, the *Khati* is the center of the social and political life of the community.

The various Khatis are believed to possess different forces: some of them are regarded as more powerful than others and are called *magari Khati,* meaning "strong image," from the Georgian words magari (strong) and Khati (holy image). The people think that the *Khatis* differ from each other not only in power but also in quality. Consequently, some of the *Khatis* are approached only in special cases. For example, there are *Khatis* which are regarded as protectors of the shepherds; other *Khatis* protect hunters and farmers; and there are even *Khatis* for the protection of thieves and robbers, to whom the latter pray for help and give thank offerings after a successful theft or a work of brigandage. And we find among the Khevsurs that the *Khati* called *Sameba-Tsrolis-Khado,* situated in the village of Ukhand-Khado, is regarded as the special protector of hunters and robbers, who give a part of their spoils to this *Khati* as a thank offering for the success of their expeditions. This *Khati* is believed to possess also the power to make barren women fruitful. The *Khati* of Gudani, which has the surname of "God's leader of hosts," is viewed as the protector against thieves and beasts of prey and as the healer of human and animal diseases. The *Khati* of Karatis Jvari is supposed to exercise great power over various evil spirits.

Among the Svans the leading sanctuary is that of St. Quirike.

The principal sanctuaries (*Khatis*) of the Khevsurs are four: (1) *Gudanis-Jvari;* (2) *Khakhmatis-Jvari;* (3) *Sanebis-Jvari;* and (4) *Karatis-Jvari.*

The names of the sanctuaries originated mostly from the names of the villages where they are situated, with the addition of the word *jvari.* This word means "a cross." One exception, however, in Khevsuria is the *Karatis-Jvari,* which is situated in the village of Likoki. Incidentally, the Ossets also call their places of worship and reverence and the ruins of old churches found in

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Swan
Chevsur

their country by the name of *dzvari*, which is derived from the Georgian word *jvari* (cross) and indicates the influence which the Georgian Church rendered in the propagation of Christianity among the Ossets. Mr. R. D. Eristov[24] gives in tabular form the names of all the sanctuaries and the number of *dekanozis* and *khutsis* in Khevsuria. According to his information, at that time (1854) there were in Khevsuria fifteen sanctuaries (*Khatis*), with two *dekanozis* and twelve *khutsis*.

The sanctuary of *Lashris-jvari*, dedicated to St. George, was built in Pshavia, according to the Georgian historian Prince Vakhusht, by the son of the famous Georgian Queen Thamar, King George IV, called Lasha. Describing the country of the Pshavs, Prince Vakhusht writes:[25] "Here in Pshavia is a church built by King Lasha in which there are preserved a great number of gold and silver holy images (icons) and crosses, vessels and books. They call it *Lashris-jvari* and keep it in great respect. No one among the Pshavs and Khevsurs who has acquired gold or silver has a right to use it for himself, but must present it to the *Lashris-jvari*."

Queen Thamar and her son Georgi Lasha were held in such high esteem by the people that they were deified and the churches which, it is supposed, were built by them were dedicated to them and given their names — *Lashris-jvari* (the cross of Lasha) and the *Khati Thamar-mepe* (King Tamar—the word *mepe* in the Georgian language means king).

The sanctuaries (*Khatis*) of the Khevsurs and Pshavs are built of slates without mortar, near the village, and usually in the midst of woods which are considered sacred—usually old and luxurious oak, plane, ash, and beech trees. The *Khati* represents a small square room without windows and is also called *Krvivi*. In the middle of the *Khati* is sometimes placed a cross, and in a heap on the floor are different objects representing offerings made by the people. But the most important thing in the *Khati* is the standard (*drosha*) possessed by every sanctuary and exercising a great influence upon the people, who view it with eyes of

[24] Eristov: a, 109.
[25] Vakhusht: 109-110.
[a] [i.e., attendants - -Analyst]

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevisa

778 341 reverence and fear, and in time of war the people follow their *drosha* without hesitation in risking their lives. The *drosha* is a silver-set pole with a silver ball (*baragchi*) at the top, upon which is fixed an iron spear. Around the *drosha* is wound a piece of cloth called *sakadrisi*, meaning worthy.[26] Instead of an iron spear, the *drosha* may have also a cross, plain or with crucifix.[27] "The *drosha* presents a kind of sign or standard," writes Uvarov, "consisting of a tall wooden pole with gilded silver balls on the top, upon which is affixed a cross. Below the cross are attached simple cotton handkerchiefs instead of a banner. The crosses on two *droshas* in the village of Gudani are of gilded silver and present a crucifix of poor workmanship." Some small bells are attached to the *droshas*.[28] Outside the *Khati*, on a rudely hewn post hangs the church bell.
church bell.

Nobody is permitted to enter the *Khati* except the *dekanozi*, the attendants.

Besides the Khati, there are other buildings on the sacred grounds which are used for various purposes in the religious proceedings of the people: (1) a low, dark hut surrounded by a stone wall, which serves as a storage place for the vessels used during the brewing of the beer, drinking cups, etc., all being the property of the *Khati* and regarded as sacred; (2) a second hut which is used as the brewery and which contains enormous flat copper pots with inclined sides. Some of them are so large that they are capable of holding thirty Russian puds[29] of barley, from which the beer is made. Beer is regarded as a sacred drink and is prepared by specially appointed attendants of the *Khati*, the *dasturis*. (3) The third cabin is used by the *dekanozi* as a lodging place during the special holidays and is called *darbazi*. (4) The fourth building, which serves as the meeting-hall, is called *sastumro*, meaning the guestroom, from the Georgian words, *stumari* (guest). It is also called *sajaro*, meaning "for the people," from the word *jari* (army, multitude of people).

[26] Eristov: a, 99.
[27] Uvarov: 234-5.
[28] Khakhanov: a, 45.
[29] Pud—Russian measure of weight; 1 pud = 31.11 pounds.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur

Besides the above-mentioned buildings on the sacred grounds of the *Khati*[1] there are also: (1) an altar put together from stones. On the altar is placed a cup, and around it are placed different objects, such as beads, small looking-glasses, pieces of metal, money, etc., which are brought by the people as offerings to the *Khati*. (2) Near the altar is a pit covered with stone slabs and having a quadrangular aperture through which runs the blood of sacrificed animals, the skulls of which are hung or set up on the branches of the trees nearby. (3) The stone pillar about one and one-half metres high, with a square base and gradually inclined forward to the flat top, so that the pillar represents the form of a truncated pyramid. Upon it is found a great number of horns of different shapes and kinds from wild animals which have been killed and brought as thank-offerings to the *Khati* by hunters. During the special religious celebrations and festivals, the candles are fixed upon it and burned in honor of the *Khati*.

The whole ground occupied by the *Khati*, the other buildings, and the sacred grove is surrounded by a stone wall. Women, who are regarded as unclean, have no right to enter the walled precincts of the *Khati*. During the religious festivals and celebrations, which present an occasion for plenty of eating and still more drinking, the women are served outside the *Khati* walls, where they have a good time in their own way.

These sanctuaries (*Khatis*)[1] have special attendants who are the guardians of the material belongings of the sanctuaries as well as the faithful conservers of all traditions and the executors of the different ceremonies which constitute their religion. The number of these attendants is considerable and each of them has a special name and special duties to perform.

Although having the same names, the prerogatives of the attendants of the *Khati* in the different communities are not the same. The attendant, for example, called *dasturi* has more obligations in one community than in another; the same is true of the other servants of the *Khati*: the *dekanozi*, *khutsi*, and *khevis-beri*. The name has not the same equivalent of rank. Consequently the accounts of various authors concerning the different categories of the attendants of the *Khati* and their functions are not in accord-

[1] [see p. 25 ff. --Analyst]

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur
Svan

whither he goes by a special pathway which cannot be used by anyone but him. He must take the baths, regardless of weather or the time of year.

All the above-mentioned attendants of the *Khati* have their office either for a certain period of time, as the *shulta* and *dasturi*, or for life, as the *khutsi* and *dekanozi*. None of these duties is hereditary. Besides the above mentioned dignitaries of the sanctuary, there is one more, called the *khevis-beri*, whose post is hereditary, and if he dies without issue his place is filled by the *khutsis*, *dekanozis* and *dasturis*. According to Professor A. Khakhanov, the duty of the *khevis-beri* is not hereditary among the Tushes, but the official is chosen for life. Incidentally, it should be mentioned that Professor Khakhanov calls almost all attendants of the Tush Khati, *khevis-beri*. This word means, in English translation, "the elder of the defile," and is formed from two Georgian words: *khevi* (gorge or defile) and *beri* (monk or elder).

The people hold the *khevis-beri* in the greatest respect. He is the loyal guardian of the *Khati* and the preserver of the old traditions of the community. His duties were, as Mr. Urbneli thinks, of a purely political character. The *khevis-beris* were appointed by the Georgian kings, and only later, with the breaking of the close ties (owing to political causes) between the Lowlands—center of administration and culture—and the high mountain regions, were the duties of the *khevis-beri* gradually transformed from civil to religious character. The same opinion is expressed by Professor Khakhanov.[35]

If, after this review of the places of worship and their attendants among the Khevsurs, Pshavs and Tushes, we turn to Svanetia, we notice that a Svan church is usually a small structure built of roughly-hewed stones with a roof of thin planks. In architecture the Svan churches resemble ordinary houses. However, they are usually set apart from the dwellings, surrounded by woods, and have a stone enclosure, with a church bell suspended from a pole nearby. (Usually, on the outer walls saints and mythical heroes are pictured in the Persian style.) The interior of the churches is dark and small; the largest can accommodate no more

[35] Khakhanov: a, 44.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Svan

than eighty persons. Rods are stretched from the ceiling to support the horns of wild goats and jaw-bones of sheep which have been offered as sacrifices; these relics are so numerous that they almost fill the churches, especially those in Free Svanetia. In the corners are piles of various objects, such as arrows, helmets, pieces of broken glass, and what not. Especially interesting are the wooden cages with birds carved out of wood and hanging from the ceiling. All objects preserved in the churches are regarded as sacred. The walls inside the churches are covered with images of the saints and sometimes pictures of the kings with crowns on their heads. Characteristic of every Svan church is the large wooden cross fixed in the farther part of the church on a square elevation. Such crosses are covered with thin silver plates representing small icons (holy images). Similar crosses are also found in the churches of Dadian Svanetia, in Ilori, and in Ratcha.[36] All these churches possess, according to Bakradze, a large number of holy images, crosses and sacred books, especially those in Upper Svanetia, comprising the communities of Mujal, Mesti, Kali, and Ushkul.

The horns of animals sacrificed as thank-offerings, are preserved in the churches, such large were piles of these horns in a church in the village of Chubiani "that it was necessary to count them by thousands."[37]

The Svan churches, with all their archeological treasures as well as their worthless objects, such as broken glass, earthenware, jaw-bones of sacrificed animals, etc., were jealously guarded by the native priests (*bap* in Free Svanetia and *pap* in Dadian Svanetia). The word *pap*, or *bap*, is borrowed from the Megrelian language, in which a priest is called *papa*. The *paps* have their assistants, called *mtavar* and *dikvnar*.

The office of the *pap* is not hereditary, because anyone may attain it by fulfilling all the necessary preparations, but in the meantime the son of a *pap* has special privileges in following his father in the office without being required to make any special preparation. The *paps* came from the lower class of society — the

[36] Bakradze: a, 36
[37] Radde: a, 112-14.